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THE DECLINE OF DÉTENTE DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF GERALD R.

FORD

by

MARK WILLIAM HANSON

B.S., United States Air Force Academy, 2002

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
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The Decline of Détente During the Presidency of Gerald R.

Ford

Thesis directed by Professor Robert D. Schulzinger

While president for only 895 days and typically remembered most for his controversial pardon of his infamous predecessor Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford nonetheless occupied the Oval Office during a critical time in U.S. relations with the Soviet Union and his leadership ultimately caused the decline of the diplomatic policy of détente...

Dedicated to my family  
for mending my wings when broken  
and helping me stay aloft  
in this amazing world.

## PREFACE

Only lasting 895 days, the Gerald R. Ford presidency does not regularly receive a large amount of attention. Most historical memory of Ford surrounds his controversial pardoning of his predecessor in the Oval Office, Richard Nixon, for any crimes that he might have committed in the infamous Watergate Scandal. However, although Ford's tenure was relatively brief, his presidency witnessed monumental events including a very significant transformation in U.S.-Soviet relations.

This thesis focuses U.S.-Soviet relations during the Ford years and how the administration responded to a changing international environment. More importantly, it examines the domestic political and diplomatic policy shift against the once-celebrated policy of détente with the Soviet Union and connects détente's ultimate decline to Ford. Indeed, the Ford presidency was instrumental in the downfall of Nixon and Kissinger's détente.

Archival research performed at the Gerald R. Ford Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan provides much of the information used in formulating this thesis. Its numerous, valuable collections contain many primary sources and other documents that I was able to implement

into my argument that détente declined under Ford because of domestic political pressure and a shift in U.S.-Soviet relations. Additionally, I used memoirs, historical works, and interviews to gain more data. In all, these sources combined to form a wealth of information on the Ford administration and its diplomacy.

Some research limitations do exist and must be noted. For one, I would have preferred to be able to use information from Soviet archives so that I could include both points of view on matters. Relying on American archives since I lacked the ability to research Russian libraries, collections, and other works, I am limited to the American perspective rather than having an international one. Also, the fact that some materials were still classified in the Ford library made research more difficult since I did not have the time necessary to file for Freedom of Information Act access to some documents. Nonetheless, the materials I did compile provide an excellent foundation for my argument.

In organizing this thesis, I decided against using chronological order because several events overlapped in time. In order to lessen confusion and formulate a clearer discussion, the thesis begins with a general background on détente and Ford's assumption of the



presidency which is followed by a discussion of the Helsinki Accords. The Helsinki Accords section provides the foundation for discontent with détente among some Americans and Soviets alike. Next, I shift focus to domestic discontent with détente. This section of the thesis discusses debates within Ford's administration, intraparty problems for Ford's Republican Party including Reagan's challenge for the 1976 GOP nomination, Ford's cabinet shake-up, and the confirmation of Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense insuring the presence of a strong anti-détente voice within the administration. After examining domestic events, this thesis then turns attention to diplomatic ones.

In tracing the decline of détente between the U.S. and Soviet Union during the Ford years, this thesis discusses the breakdown of trade agreements, failure of negotiations surrounding arms control and SALT II at Vladivostok, and other diplomatic troubles that emerged. Next, I present how each side increasingly antagonized the other with maneuvers intended to challenge the status quo balance of power and ultimately how both sides took actions that reignited a feverish arms race.

All domestic and diplomatic information presented in this thesis leaves no doubt that détente came to an end

during Ford's years. Ford's legacy and historical memory of his presidency must include this fact in addition to other components that are already well-known like the controversial Nixon pardon.

#### BACKGROUND

During his administration, President Richard M. Nixon eased tensions with the Soviet Union using the policy of détente that he and Henry Kissinger, his trusted Secretary of State and National Security Adviser, crafted. Kissinger offers the following assessment of détente in his work Diplomacy:

By extricating the United States from the demoralizing bloodletting of Vietnam and refocusing the nation's attention on broader international questions, the Nixon Administration sought to forge what it called somewhat grandiloquently a 'structure of peace.' The triangular relationship among the United States, the U.S.S.R., and China unlocked the door to a series of major breakthroughs: the end of the Vietnam War; an agreement that guaranteed access to Berlin; a dramatic reduction of Soviet influence in the Middle East, and the beginning of the Arab-Israeli peace process; and the European Security Conference (completed during the Ford Administration).<sup>1</sup>

Such accomplishments are quite noteworthy since, as Nixon's successor in the White House Gerald R. Ford

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, Diplomacy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 733.

points out, "Historians will wonder how this Cold Warrior of the 1950s and 1960s could move so successfully to a policy of accord with the Soviets."<sup>2</sup> According to Ford, "The consensus will be that Nixon saw the big picture" in his decision to promote more cordial relations with the adversarial Soviets.<sup>3</sup> Initially, it would seem only logical then that President Ford should have eagerly embraced and continued Nixon's détente policies since they had enjoyed so much success in lessening the threat of catastrophic military confrontation between the military superpowers. However, this was not the case.

On August 8, 1974, Nixon made the unprecedented move to step aside as President of the United States of America after his administration became consumed by the infamous Watergate scandal. With Nixon's delivery of the historic words "Therefore, I shall resign the presidency, effective at noon tomorrow. Vice President Ford will be sworn in as president at that hour"<sup>4</sup> Ford inherited the remnants of the previous administration and its foreign policy plan that would ultimately prove outdated and needed adjusted despite the fact that "in

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<sup>2</sup> Gerald R. Ford, A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 128.

<sup>3</sup> Ford, 128.

<sup>4</sup> Ford, 37.

1974 and 1975 détente was both praised and pursued," noted by Raymond L. Garthoff in Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan.<sup>5</sup>

By the latter part of 1975 and into 1976, though, Ford acknowledged in his memoirs that "Relations with the Soviet Union were strained; we had moved from the more glamorous phase of détente into a time of testing."<sup>6</sup> Ford additionally commented in a personal interview with me that the "fluid nature" of international relations required the United States to adjust its policies to changing times.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the rising tide of new tensions between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. surrounding mostly military issues, but also including economic and humanitarian concerns, combined with domestic political pressure on Ford to make him pursue a more aggressive U.S. foreign policy and assert his own authority as the President. This led to the dismantling of Nixon's once triumphant détente.

During Ford's 895 days as commander-in-chief,<sup>8</sup> détente did not quietly transform into something else,

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1994), 489.

<sup>6</sup> Ford, 125.

<sup>7</sup> Gerald R. Ford, interview by 2LT Mark W. Hanson, USAF, 24 April 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Ford, 126.

but rather, as diplomatic historian Robert D. Schulzinger points out in U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900, "Ford acknowledged that *détente* had become a term of abuse, and he banned it from his vocabulary"<sup>9</sup> signaling an aggressive move away from that program. Clearly, the desire for relaxed tensions with the Soviets was dwindling in favor of a stronger tone as is evident from events during the Ford years.

Kissinger in Years of Renewal proclaims that "Gerald Ford healed the nation and launched it on a course that, in subsequent administrations, culminated in victory in the Cold War and a dominant role in shaping the structure of the world."<sup>10</sup> Interestingly enough, it was the decision to abandon the *détente* structure that Kissinger helped design in favor of a more stern posture in the face of the Soviet menace, supported by elements across the political spectrum, that would have led to that ultimate American victory in the Cold War. Beginning with his decision to make significant changes to his cabinet so that he may have his "own team" rather than the one he inherited from Nixon<sup>11</sup> and culminating in the

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900, 314.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Kissinger, Years of Renewal (Simon & Schuster, 1999), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Ford-Hanson interview.

renewal of tensions, advent of and new arms race, and the breakdown of peaceful coexistence, Ford indeed reversed détente and set the early stage for American escalation of the Cold War. However, Kissinger's idea that Ford's actions directly resulted in American victory is quite exaggerated considering the fact that Ford left the White House in 1977 and the Soviet Union did not fall until August 1991.<sup>12</sup>

When Ford assumed the Presidency on August 9, 1974, he requested that the United States Marine Corps band play the "Michigan Fight Song" as opposed to the ceremonial "Hail to the Chief" or "Ruffles and Flourishes" traditionally performed as the president enters a function.<sup>13</sup> Ironically, the "Michigan Fight Song" is John Phillip Sousa's "Victor's March" which is quite an interesting selection by the former Wolverine football player since Ford's actions as president attempted to initiate a drive toward American Cold War victory and abandoned the peaceful coexistence structure of détente...

#### HELSINKI- PAVING THE WAY

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<sup>12</sup> Alan Brinkley, American History: A Survey, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill College, 1999), 1129.

<sup>13</sup> Ford, 126.

When Ford became president in 1975, the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe had already convened one year prior during the preceding administration.<sup>14</sup> As a result, most negotiations and drafting for what would become known as the Helsinki Accords had transpired. Originally proposed in 1954 by the Soviet Union which sought to use such a conference as a means to "undermine the Atlantic alliances" and "achieve postwar dominion over Central and Eastern Europe," Kissinger mentions how this maneuver backfired in serving Soviet interests and "contributed to the progressive decline and eventual collapse of the Soviet system over the next decade and a half"<sup>15</sup> with its unprecedented human rights provisions.

Peter N. Carroll in It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s provides a general summary of the outcomes at Helsinki with the following account on the negotiations between East and West:

Ford attended a summit conference of European leaders in Helsinki, Finland, in August 1975, which formally ratified the national boundary settlements of World War II. The agreement acknowledged Soviet

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<sup>14</sup> Years of Renewal, 643.

<sup>15</sup> Years of Renewal, 635.

hegemony in Eastern Europe, but, at the same time, it denied legitimacy to external interference in domestic affairs and affirmed the principles of human rights.<sup>16</sup>

While appearing reasonable overall by cementing the status quo power arrangement in Europe and even favoring U.S. interests with its human rights provisions, the Helsinki Accords would nonetheless become a political and diplomatic migraine for Ford and kick off the rapid decline of détente during his administration.

Schulzinger best articulates this when he writes, "At the moment of greatest triumph, the Helsinki Conference of August 1975, domestic backing for détente slipped."<sup>17</sup>

The Helsinki Conference certainly appeared encouraging to the young Ford administration. Kissinger's assertion that "every week it became clearer that the democracies were getting the better of the negotiations"<sup>18</sup> undermined the earlier Soviet ambition of using the conference to attain significant gains against their Western adversaries. This inspired Kissinger to

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<sup>16</sup> Peter N. Carroll, It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 165.

<sup>17</sup> Robert D. Schulzinger, Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy (New York: Columbia University Press), 211.

<sup>18</sup> Years of Renewal, 643.



emphatically urge the President to attend the conference despite domestic opposition to American participation.<sup>19</sup>

Also pleasing to the Ford administration was the adoption of the Basket III on human rights that "obliged all signatories to practice and foster certain enumerated basic human rights"<sup>20</sup> making it a "rallying point" for dissidents opposed to Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Kissinger discusses how "Helsinki Monitoring Groups" emerged in several Soviet-occupied nations that interpreted the Final Act adopted at the Helsinki Conference as "enshrining human rights in international law."<sup>21</sup> Ford himself viewed the conference as an opportunity to ensure more freedom in Soviet bloc countries for people to move about and therefore supported U.S. involvement.<sup>22</sup> He also was encouraged by the fact that the Soviets had agreed to allow national borders to be changed by "peaceful means"<sup>23</sup> which Kissinger credits partially to collapse of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe since military intervention and suppression of revolutionary freedom movements was no

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<sup>19</sup> John Robert Greene, The Presidency of Gerald R. Ford (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 152.

<sup>20</sup> Diplomacy, 759.

<sup>21</sup> Years of Renewal, 648.

<sup>22</sup> Ford, 301.

<sup>23</sup> Ford, 299.

longer justifiable meaning oppressed peoples could resist Soviet domination.<sup>24</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Soviets conceded much in this conference and definitely failed to weaken Western alliances so with the Soviet concessions to human rights and borders, it appeared that the U.S. emerged in quite a favorable position from the conference. Aggressive, cold-warrior political opponents of détente within the U.S. would interpret the outcomes otherwise.

Criticisms of Ford abounded in the aftermath of the signing of the Helsinki Accords. A common theme shared by opponents of the Final Act was that it was "'another Kissinger deal that was forced down the President's throat.'"<sup>25</sup> Osvalds Akmentins of the Latvian Press Society accused Ford of signing a "'miserable and un-American treaty" that "buries the hopes of millions of Eastern European peoples in ever securing freedom and independence.'"<sup>26</sup> The Wall Street Journal had urged the President not to attend the signing ceremony because of such concerns as those Akmentins voiced, the New York Times referred to Ford's ultimate trip as "'misguided and empty,'" Senator Jackson charged Ford with "'taking us

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<sup>24</sup> Years of Renewal, 648.

<sup>25</sup> Ford, 301.

<sup>26</sup> Years of Renewal, 643.

backward, not forward, in search for a genuine peace'" and, most destructive politically to the Ford presidency, Ronald Reagan began to level attacks against the administration in order to bolster his chances for seizing the Republican nomination in 1976.<sup>27</sup>

Reagan, now a "grave political threat"<sup>28</sup> to Ford, vociferously criticized the administration's actions at Helsinki. Among his attacks was his conviction that "'Mr. Ford flew halfway around the world to sign an agreement at Helsinki which placed the American seal of approval on the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe'"<sup>29</sup> and his ultimate opinion on the Final Act was revealed when he stated "'I am against it [the Helsinki Conference], and I think all Americans should be against it.'"<sup>30</sup> Reagan's rhetoric contributed to the common notion among conservatives that Ford's signing of the Helsinki Accords was a "sellout to the Soviets"<sup>31</sup> and further divided the already splintering Republican Party.

Conservative politicians like Senators Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond's dissatisfaction with Ford's inability to schedule a meeting with the anti-Communist,

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<sup>27</sup> Ford, 300.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy, 215.

<sup>29</sup> Years of Renewal, 662-663.

<sup>30</sup> Ford, 300.

<sup>31</sup> Greene, 153.

Soviet refugee author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn on 4 July 1975 because of scheduling conflicts involving the President's visit to Cleveland and Cincinnati on 3 July and Independence Day festivities upon his return to Washington<sup>32</sup> further added to the President's troubles as the conservative element of his own party viewed him as not tough enough on communism. Anger over the Solzhenitsyn "snub"<sup>33</sup> and the rhetoric accompanying Reagan's inevitable bid for the Republican nomination<sup>34</sup> generated immense criticism against the President among members of his own party that would have disastrous implications for his reelection bid.

Kissinger's Birmingham, Alabama speech on 14 August 1975 offered the following assessment of the Final Act:

It is not we who were on the defensive at Helsinki; it is not we who were being challenged by all the delegations to live up to the principles being signed. At Helsinki, for the first time in the postwar period, human rights and fundamental freedoms became recognized subjects of East-West discourse and negotiation. The conference put forward our standards of humane conduct, which have been--and still are--a beacon of hope to millions.<sup>35</sup>

Kissinger also views the Final Act as a turning point in the Cold War that would have significant impact upon the

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<sup>32</sup> Years of Renewal, 649.

<sup>33</sup> Ford, 298.

<sup>34</sup> Ford, 295.

<sup>35</sup> Years of Renewal, 663.

end of the Soviet system.<sup>36</sup> Ford cites in his memoirs Jose A. Cabranes, who was the vice president of the International League for Human Rights as saying, "'Careful reading of the Helsinki [documents] will confirm that the Soviet bloc did not achieve its principle objectives.'"<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, while history may judge the Final Act as an agreement favorable to U.S. interests, contemporary analysts slammed Ford.

Anti-détente critics assailed the president as a "sellout" and Republican leaders created a "Morality in Foreign Policy" plank in the 1976 party platform that praised Solzhenitsyn and, figuratively slapping Ford in the face, "characterized the Helsinki Agreement as 'taking from those who do not have freedom the hope of one day getting it.'"<sup>38</sup> Consequently, Ford's own party provided ammunition for Democratic Presidential Nominee Jimmy Carter in the election of 1976 who chastised Ford saying "'We ratified the Russian takeover of Eastern Europe'"<sup>39</sup> by approving the Final Act and "promised that he would restore order and a sense of purpose to United States foreign policy."<sup>40</sup> The Helsinki Accords, despite

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<sup>36</sup> Years of Renewal, 635.

<sup>37</sup> Ford, 306.

<sup>38</sup> Ford, 398.

<sup>39</sup> Greene, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy, 236.

apparent American success, laid the groundwork for a rising movement against détente that would heavily impact the Ford Presidency and strongly influence international relations between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

#### INTERNAL CONFLICT

Ford's cabinet became an ideological battleground in formulating policy to wage the Cold War. Heated debates and disagreements over the feasibility of détente between Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger and Secretary of State and National Security Adviser Kissinger signaled increasing conflict within Ford's administration. The fact that Ford's relationship with Schlesinger was quite strained also became a burden on the administration. The growing rift between pro and anti-détente voices would eventually partly influence monumental changes in the structure of the President's cabinet.

Schlesinger was certainly a headache for Ford. From the beginning of Ford's presidency, tensions abounded. For instance, Ford became infuriated when rumors spread that Schlesinger acted to prevent Nixon giving unilateral orders to American armed forces just prior to his resignation because the Secretary of Defense questioned

Nixon's mental stability. Ford confronted Schlesinger in the Oval Office early in his presidency about these allegations and while Schlesinger never admitted to any involvement in the fabrication of such stories, they did cease interestingly enough. Ford remarked of the incident that this "was the first run-in I had with Schlesinger. I hoped it would be the last, but I suspected otherwise."<sup>41</sup> Ford's instincts served him well in this instance.

A November 17, 1975 Newsweek article details how Schlesinger was "Openly dissident"<sup>42</sup> and was notorious for his "High-profile squabbling with Kissinger over détente and with Congress over money."<sup>43</sup> Such uncooperative and combative aspects of Schlesinger's persona certainly undermined the necessary harmony needed to run a successful administration. More important though for understanding why Schlesinger was not a beneficial member of the administration was the fact that "Ford developed a greater appreciation of Schlesinger's management and grasp of complex defense issues, but he never felt comfortable with the cerebral, often disdainful, Harvard

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<sup>41</sup> Ford, 136.

<sup>42</sup> Newsweek magazine clipping from article entitled "Ford's Big Shuffle," 17 November 1975, p. 24, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives Gerald R. Ford Library (G.R.F.L.), Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

Ph.D."<sup>44</sup> and "Ford simply did not like him."<sup>45</sup> Garthoff adds that Ford and Schlesinger's relationship "was not marked by the mutual respect that was essential."<sup>46</sup> Consequently, the Secretary of Defense was just a man that the President was unable to work with and the fact that he was known for making, in the words of Kissinger, "potshots against the President's foreign policy,"<sup>47</sup> especially criticisms of détente, made him even more of a liability. Ford wanted to remove Schlesinger from his cabinet from the time he took office, but was aware of the political ramifications of such an act since the Secretary of Defense was so popular among anti-détente factions.<sup>48</sup> In time though, significant changes directly involving Schlesinger would transpire.

Not only did the Secretary of Defense create problems for Ford, but the Secretary of State and National Security Adviser Kissinger, while holding Ford's respect and admiration, also became troublesome. Initially, Ford insisted that Kissinger maintain his positions in the executive branch pleading that both he

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>46</sup> Garthoff, 419.

<sup>47</sup> Years of Renewal, 838.

<sup>48</sup> Greene, 121.



and the country needed Kissinger's service.<sup>49</sup> Ford's recollections of Kissinger in his memoirs also reflect the deep appreciation he felt for his trusted advisor on diplomacy when he writes that "Our relationship began on solid, unshakable ground and grew even better with the passage of time. He had gone through hell during the final days of the Nixon administration and he had agreed to stay on only because I said I needed him."<sup>50</sup> However, as more time passed, Kissinger proved to be a source of uneasiness for Ford.

The President's discomfort with Kissinger "having two hats"<sup>51</sup> and growing criticisms that Kissinger, not the President, controlled foreign policy<sup>52</sup> became issues Ford would have to face and act upon. Also, the "decline in Kissinger's prestige among conservative members of the Republican party"<sup>53</sup> resulting from the backlash against détente began to harm part of Ford's support base in his reelection bid.

On May 29, 1975, Soviet Minister of Defense Marshal Grechko "warned about 'forces of reaction and aggression' in the United States that oppose détente and that 'have

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<sup>49</sup> Garthoff, 490.

<sup>50</sup> Ford, 129.

<sup>51</sup> Ford-Hanson Interview.

<sup>52</sup> Greene 161.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900, 314.

not abandoned their plans to resolve the conflict between capitalism and socialism by force of arms.'" <sup>54</sup> Indeed, anti-détente voices were becoming increasingly prominent in the United States. Democratic Senator Henry Jackson's reference to détente as "a strategic alternative to overtly militant antagonism" <sup>55</sup> and ALF-CIO President George Meany's charge before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "détente is based on U.S. weakness" <sup>56</sup> exemplified the anti-détente leadership's views. The Defense Intelligence Agency also issued a report entitled "Détente in Soviet Strategy" that concluded "'In Moscow's view...détente is clearly working to its advantage.'" <sup>57</sup> With such attacks on the rise, Ford's attachment to détente became a huge political pain that he longed to alleviate.

From the Helsinki Accords on, California Republican Ronald Reagan led the conservative charge against Ford who was "leading an increasingly divided party." <sup>58</sup> John Robert Greene discusses how "By late 1974 Ford's policies had become regular targets for criticism in Reagan's

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<sup>54</sup> Garthoff, 519.

<sup>55</sup> Diplomacy, 746.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 746.

<sup>57</sup> Newsweek magazine clipping from article entitled "Ford's Big Shuffle," 17 November 1975, p. 28, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>58</sup> Years of Renewal, 834.

weekly newspaper column." In addition to Reagan's disdain for détente, the fact that Reagan and Ford "genuinely disliked each other" fueled the upcoming "intraparty bloodletting" that would take place during the 1976 primaries.<sup>59</sup> Facing vehement opposition to détente, doubts of his effectiveness as a leader, and a serious threat from the Reaganites for the GOP nomination, "the persistent advice from his [Ford's] political handlers was no more Mr. Nice Guy—do something *Presidential*."<sup>60</sup> In November 1975, Ford would attempt exactly that in an ill-fated effort to restore confidence in his leadership, silence his critics, and hopefully propel him to a second term by thrusting him past Reagan.

#### THE HALLOWEEN MASSACRE

Sudden, sweeping changes took place in the Ford White House in early November 1975. In a published Statement by the President from the Office of the White House Press Secretary on November 3, 1975, Ford outlined his alterations to his cabinet. Among Ford's first and most

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<sup>59</sup> Greene, 60.

<sup>60</sup> Newsweek magazine clipping from article entitled "Ford's Big Shuffle," 17 November 1975, p. 26, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

significant announcements was his nomination of Donald Rumsfeld to the position of Secretary of Defense, replacing the defiant Schlesinger who angrily chose to take leave for the remainder of his tenure rather than serve out his time in the Administration.<sup>61</sup> Ford did mention that "The nation owes Secretary Schlesinger a deep debt of gratitude for his able service to his country as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Director of Central Intelligence, and Secretary of Defense" despite his dislike of the former cabinet member. Other major changes would transpire as well.

Ford also included in his announcement that Kissinger would "relinquish his post" as National Security Adviser and his deputy Brent Scowcroft would replace him so that Kissinger could focus his full attention on his duties as Secretary of State. This accomplished the objective of reducing "Kissinger's visibility while retaining the substance of his policies"<sup>62</sup> since Ford admired his work and desired to keep him in the administration, but was also aware of the political liabilities threatening Ford's support from the

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<sup>61</sup> News Conference #365 at the White House with Ron Nessen at 12:17PM EST, 4 November 1975 (Tuesday), p. 7, Ronald H. Nessen Press Secretary to the President Files; 1974-77, Box 14-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>62</sup> Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy, 218.

conservative wing of the Republican Party<sup>63</sup> that the controversial Secretary of State posed. Ford ultimately wanted to remove Kissinger from the spotlight so as to lessen the negative political ramifications he aroused, but still maintain his valuable service.

Additional changes included Ford's announcement that William Colby would be removed from his position as Director of the CIA and replaced by George Bush who was currently serving as the American ambassador to the People's Republic of China and Dick Cheney would replace Rumsfeld as the White House Chief of Staff.<sup>64</sup> In one decisive move, Ford relieved himself of the burden of dealing with Schlesinger, removed Kissinger's second hat as he had desired, and tried to exemplify strong, decisive leadership.

The transcript from a meeting between the President, Senior Staff, and Congressional Relations Staff on November 3, 1975 at 12:50 P.M. where the President stressed that "The above personnel changes were my decision" and that he needed better "team work"<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>64</sup> STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT, 3 November 1975, p. 1, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>65</sup> Meeting with the President, Senior Staff and Congressional Relations Staff- Roosevelt Room, 3 November 1975, p. 1, Robert K. Wolthius Special Assistant to the

indicated that Ford was making an effort to act "presidential," as his strategists had advised, by making some difficult, significant decisions. The fact that both Kissinger and Rumsfeld in a private meeting with the President expressed concern with Ford's decisions, yet Ford went forth with his changes anyway<sup>66</sup> demonstrated that he was capable of making his own decisions and was not necessarily vulnerable to manipulation by his closest advisors.

Years later, Ford wrote to Kissinger on October 14, 1997 that "'I believe the White House changes with the firing of Schlesinger and Colby were affirmative. For them to continue in office would have been intolerable'"<sup>67</sup> in order to provide Kissinger with more information for his upcoming book Years of Renewal. Indeed, Ford's decision was in his best personal interests as President because he was quoted in the Washington Post on November 10, 1975 saying "'for me to do the job as well as I possibly can, I need a feeling of comfort within an organization: no tension, complete cohesion...There was a growing tension, and I felt very strongly that I needed

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President Files; 1974-77, Box 5-Folder "Staff meeting with the President 11/3/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>66</sup> Garthoff, 492.

<sup>67</sup> Years of Renewal, 841

to have a comfortable feeling even though people might disagree."<sup>68</sup> After all, "By October, Ford found it impossible to make peace between the two principal foreign policy cabinet secretaries"<sup>69</sup> so, favoring Kissinger, Ford relieved Schlesinger of his duties.

The burdens on Ford's leadership that Schlesinger and Colby posed made the decision to get rid of them quite reasonable. However, Kissinger and Rumsfeld's concerns about the ramifications of firing Schlesinger because of Ford's personal animosity and the negative implications Ford's cabinet adjustments might have on his credibility as commander-in-chief since he had said originally that his cabinet was "set"<sup>70</sup> would prove haunting. Ford's attempt to bolster confidence in his leadership and raise his job approval rating backfired.<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately, the Senate's confirmation of Rumsfeld to the position of Secretary of Defense was not indicative of support for the President's move. While William T. Kendall, the Deputy Assistant for Legislative Affairs with the Senate indicated to Jack Marsh,

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<sup>68</sup> Washington Post clipping from article entitled "Ford: Tension Led to Ouster of Schlesinger," 10 November 1975, John Marsh Files, Box 1-"Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>69</sup> Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy, 217.

<sup>70</sup> Ford, 326.

<sup>71</sup> Garthoff, 492.

Counsellor to the President, that "Don is encountering no 'anti' feeling for himself," he also stated that "there is much 'pro-Schlesinger' sentiment." Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) was consistent with this pattern in that he was "Pro-Schlesinger but not anti-Rumsfeld." Other Senators such as Senator Hugh Scott (R-PA) were "like some others, worried about DR's [Don Rumsfeld's] ability to stand up to HAK [Henry A. Kissinger] on détente, etc."<sup>72</sup> Clearly, there was significant opposition to the continuation of détente among some leaders in the Senate and members wanted to ensure that Rumsfeld would not embrace that foreign policy outline. Eventually, the Senate would form a consensus in support of Ford's assertion that Rumsfeld "has the experience and skill needed to help our country maintain a defense capability second to none"<sup>73</sup> after their fears of Rumsfeld blindly supporting détente subsided, but this by no means meant that Ford would escape harsh criticism.

Ford in his memoirs offered the following account of Schlesinger's firing:

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<sup>72</sup> Memorandum from William T. Kendall to Jack Marsh "The Nominations of Don Rumsfeld and George Bush," 8 November 1975, William T. Kendall Files, Box 10-Folder "Rumsfeld, Donald Secretary, DOD," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>73</sup> STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT, 3 November 1975, p. 1, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.



His face tensed and he rejected the offer (being appointed director of the Export-Import Bank) disdainfully. He still dragged on for nearly an hour. The more he talked, the angrier I got and the surer I was that my decision had been right. Finally, at nine twenty-three, after one of the most disagreeable conversations I have ever had, he got up to leave. My problems with him, I thought, haven't ended; it's likely that I'll hear from him again.<sup>74</sup>

In this instance, the President truly had keen insight.

A Washington Post article from November 11, 1975 discussing Schlesinger's farewell from the Pentagon quoted the former Secretary of Defense who stated in his address that "détente should be pursued 'vigorously' but 'without illusion'" which was clearly an attack on Ford and Kissinger making the two of them appear misguided. Schlesinger also held the Administration responsible for a "'National mood of skepticism'" and insinuated that the current national leadership threatened the military's ability to serve as a "'pillar of stability.'"<sup>75</sup> Inspired by such rhetoric, criticism from Capitol Hill barraged Ford.

Numerous senators, especially politically-inspired Democrats eager to further attack the President's credibility and increase their party's chances of

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<sup>74</sup> Ford, 330.

<sup>75</sup> Washington Post clipping from article entitled "Schlesinger Warns of Illusions," 11 November 1975, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

regaining the White House in 1976, contacted the media via press releases to express dissatisfaction with the President's cabinet changes. For instance, Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-WA), Democratic presidential hopeful and a notable opponent of détente who fought for the amendment of the trade bill between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in 1972 that only granted Most Favored Nation status to the Soviets if they agreed to unrestricted Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union,<sup>76</sup> was among the first to attack Ford. He proclaimed that "Don Rumsfeld and George Bush cannot hold a candle to James Schlesinger and Bill Colby in terms of judgment, knowledge, or intellectual ability." He further added that "The Ford administration cannot provide us with the leadership we must have in the crucial areas of foreign policy" and that "Mr. Ford's repeated celebrations of the successes of détente are an attempt to sell a false sense of security."<sup>77</sup>

Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) leveled more attacks against Ford in his press release challenging the credibility of the administration, expressing concern that "Mr. Ford has removed the one man who articulated

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<sup>76</sup> Greene, 122.

<sup>77</sup> Press Release: Senator Henry M. Jackson, 8 November 1975, William T. Kendall Files, Box 10-Folder "Rumsfeld, Donald (Secretary, Department of Defense)," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

best the dangers of over-emphasis on détente with the Russians," and argued that Ford was too dependent on Kissinger in areas of foreign policy.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, Byrd felt that Kissinger's replacement by his former deputy, Scowcroft, represented no major change and that the pro-détente Kissinger would still be in control of the National Security Council.

Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX) shared Byrd's concern when he stated that "Kissinger replaces Kissinger as National Security Adviser." He also charged the following:

Dr. Kissinger prevailed against the Defense Department at Vladivostok. He prevailed against the Agriculture Department in the Russian Grain Deal. He prevailed against the Treasury Department on the question of energy policy. The man's obviously dominating the entire Cabinet, and I think there's too much concentration of power here.<sup>79</sup>

Newsweek's comment that "the Russians were pleased"<sup>80</sup> with Schlesinger's firing fueled further discontent with the Ford Administration since it appeared that the Russians now no longer had to be concerned about any

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<sup>78</sup> Press Release: Senator Robert C. Byrd, 3 November 1975, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>79</sup> Press Release: Senator Lloyd Bentsen, 3 November 1975, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>80</sup> Newsweek magazine clipping from article entitled "Ford's Big Shuffle," 17 November 1975, p. 25, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

members of the administration standing up against détente which was arguably favoring the Soviet side according to numerous senators and the Defense Intelligence Agency report "Détente in Soviet Strategy." So, Kissinger appeared to be, in the words of Senator Byrd, the "real winner" from the shake-up since Schlesinger was gone and he would "remain the 'dominant' man in U.S. foreign policy,"<sup>81</sup> but this by no means meant that the Administration would continue to pursue détente since political challenges to it became almost overwhelming to Ford.

Prior to the Ford's "Halloween" or "Sunday Morning Massacre," he enjoyed a sizable 58-36 lead over Republican challenger Ronald Reagan in a Gallup Poll for the GOP nomination. Immediately following the shake-up, Reagan edged ahead 44-43.<sup>82</sup> According to Greene, "Reagan recognized that the negative reaction against Ford provided the perfect time to enter the race formally."<sup>83</sup> Consequently, on November 19, 1975, Reagan informed Ford in a phone call to the Oval Office that "I am going to run for president. I trust we can have a good contest,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>83</sup> Greene, 162.

and I hope that it won't be divisive.'" <sup>84</sup> Ford challenged the notion that such a race would not be divisive, but Reagan was not swayed and began his campaign for the presidency. <sup>85</sup>

Responding to Ford's demotion of Kissinger and liberal Republican Nelson Rockefeller's decision not to run on the 1976 Ford presidential ticket, Reagan said "I am not appeased" in a campaign speech. <sup>86</sup> Then, Reagan began to capitalize on the détente issue which he viewed as "tailor-made for his campaign against the Washington establishment. Using Henry Kissinger as a foil, he could attack the Ford administration without attacking Ford and gain political capital with the right wing of the party." <sup>87</sup> He also attacked the Ford administration directly with statements like the following:

Mr. Ford says détente will be replaced by 'peace through strength...Well, now that slogan has a nice ring to it, but neither Mr. Ford nor his new Secretary of Defense will say that our strength is superior to all others...I believe former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger was trying to speak the truth frankly and boldly to his fellow citizens. And that's why he's no longer Secretary of Defense. <sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ford, 333.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>86</sup> Newsweek magazine clipping from article entitled "Ford's Big Shuffle," 17 November 1975, p. 24, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>87</sup> Greene, 164.

<sup>88</sup> Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy, 227.

Certainly with growing animosity toward Kissinger and the administration's foreign policy, Ford was forced to abandon détente or risk losing the Republican nomination in 1976 to Reagan. Politically wise, he chose to salvage his presidential chances rather than sink his ambitions by supporting the increasingly unpopular policy.

At first glance, it certainly appears that Kissinger and the détente advocates were the true victors in the Halloween Massacre. After all, the President's move to "prove himself a strong man capable of ruthless political executions"<sup>89</sup> had just fired the strongest opponent of détente within the administration. Some members of the American press deemed Schlesinger "the best defense secretary in our history,"<sup>90</sup> so opting to release such a popular figure while keeping Kissinger should indicate Ford's favoritism for the Secretary of State's diplomatic practices. However, while Ford did remove some "dissenters and figures of controversy,"<sup>91</sup> the Rumsfeld nomination prevented the silencing of the anti-détente movement within Ford's administration since Rumsfeld was "known to have the same reservations about détente as

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<sup>89</sup> Washington Post clipping from article entitled "Other Voices: The Ford Shake-up," 11 November 1975, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Schlesinger and to have mixed feelings toward Dr. Kissinger."<sup>92</sup>

Ford's press secretary Ron Nessen best alluded to the fact that détente would face future challenges in a November 5, 1975 press conference when he told the media that "I think anyone who knows Don Rumsfeld and knows his record on defense matters in Congress and knows his record at NATO and here at the White House cannot believe that Don is going to be any less forceful in expressing his views to the President than some of his predecessors have been."<sup>93</sup> Further, Nessen stated that "a change of personnel does not represent a change of policy" with regards to whether or not Rumsfeld's views were parallel to Schlesinger's. Ultimately, Ford's firing of Schlesinger had more to do with personality differences than policy ones. Rumsfeld's close friendship with the president<sup>94</sup> made him a man who satisfied Ford's need for a better, more cooperative "team" and signaled Ford's desire to move away from détente, rather than pursue it.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> News Conference #366 at the White House with Ron Nessen at 11:38AM EST," 5 November 1975 (Wednesday), p. 13, Ronald H. Nessen Press Secretary to the President Files; 1974-77, Box 14-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>94</sup> Newsweek magazine clipping from article entitled "Ford's Big Shuffle," 17 November 1975, p. 35, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

In all, what started out as an effort to remove tensions from Ford's administration and assert his presidential leadership and viability came to be viewed as "Ford's great shuffle" that "was hastily planned, badly timed and clumsily executed, and in the end it only inflamed the doubts it was intended to settle."<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, despite Kissinger's retention, the Rumsfeld nomination ushered in a new era of Cold War tensions between the superpowers and contributed to détente's decline.

#### DONALD RUMSFELD- COLD WARRIOR

During the hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services concerning Rumsfeld's confirmation, Senator Barry Goldwater raised the following concern:

Secretary Schlesinger provided the country with the only authoritative voice that would argue with the Secretary of State's position on détente. I would sincerely hope, knowing you as I do, and knowing you to be very firm in your convictions, and having a suspicion, not knowing it, that you would support the Schlesinger positions, that if that is true you will continue to provide a voice in the cabinet so that the American people can have the benefit of opposing views on détente, versus a weakened military structure.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>96</sup> Nomination of Donald Rumsfeld to be Secretary of Defense Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services United



Goldwater was expressing worries that many members of the Senate held regarding Kissinger's undesirable heavy influence of foreign policy issues. He also wanted the assurance that Rumsfeld would not be a pushover and passively concede to Kissinger's dominance of American diplomatic practices—namely détente with the Soviet Union. Fortunately for Goldwater and other like-minded, hawkish members of the United States Senate, Rumsfeld quickly eased such fears with his well-crafted, satisfying responses.

A November 9, 1975 article in the Washington Post entitled "Different Views on Defense" outlined the new perspective that Rumsfeld would bring to the Department of Defense upon being confirmed by the Senate. Some of the article's major points included that "Donald H. Rumsfeld long has argued that Congress should have more authority over the nation's military policy—a philosophy strikingly different from that of James R. Schlesinger," and that Rumsfeld "is expected to be an implementer of White House policy, not an innovator of policy as former Secretaries of Defense Schlesinger and Robert S. McNamara

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States Senate, 12-13 November 1975, p. 23, Richard Cheney Files, Box 3-Folder "Defense- Hearings on Donald Rumsfeld's Nomination as Secretary of Defense, 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

were."<sup>97</sup> Further contrasting Rumsfeld with Schlesinger, the Washington Post points out how Rumsfeld will be much more tactful with members of Congress and would not likely "follow Schlesinger's lead and blast Congress."<sup>98</sup> This definitely would make him much better at negotiating with Congress since he would be a more pleasant figure to deal with and not incite animosity from members of the House or Senate. Nonetheless, while Rumsfeld and Schlesinger differed in the areas the article noted, Rumsfeld's congressional testimony gave the indication that the two men were very much alike in important areas, winning him congressional favor.

Rumsfeld responded to questions from both Senators Scott<sup>99</sup> and Byrd<sup>100</sup> that no major policy differences existed between the two men which indicated that Rumsfeld would likely be as vehemently opposed to accommodation with the Soviet Union in the form of détente as

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<sup>97</sup> Washington Post clipping from article entitled "Different View on Defense," 9 November 1975, John Marsh Files; 1974-77, Box 1-Folder "Defense- Confirmation of Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L, Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Nomination of Donald Rumsfeld to be Secretary of Defense Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate, 12-13 November 1975, p. 39, Richard Cheney Files, Box 3-Folder "Defense- Hearings on Donald Rumsfeld's Nomination as Secretary of Defense, 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L, Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 56.

Schlesinger had been. His opening remarks during the hearings and subsequent testimonies to members of the committee definitely illustrated his leanings toward a strong defense structure and against détente thus satisfying those with anti-communist, hawkish views on defense policy.

Rumsfeld's opening statements before the Senate Committee on Armed Services demonstrated his aggressive Cold-Warrior mentality. His statement that "It is clear in the last decade the Soviet Union has made a substantial, determined effort to expand and modernize its forces, bringing new, heavy missiles into its strategic forces, and increasing the size of Soviet Forces. No one can safely afford to ignore the existing fundamental differences and the opposing military capabilities as we pursue better relations"<sup>101</sup> definitely resonated among members of the anti-détente factions. Calls for a strong, sustainable defense structure that was "second-to-none"<sup>102</sup> also satisfied opponents of détente that sought greater defense capabilities and the use of deterrence as a bargaining chip in U.S.-Soviet

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<sup>101</sup> STATEMENT OF DONALD H. RUMSFELD Prepared for THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE, 12 November 1975, p. 2, National Security Adviser Presidential Name File 74-77, Box 3-Folder "Rumsfeld, Don" Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 3.

relations. Finally, Rumsfeld's call for improved readiness among National Guard and Reserve components of the U.S. military and increased military spending<sup>103</sup> showed his desire to strengthen the current state of the American armed forces. Rumsfeld's ensuing responses to questioning by Senators further established his position on maintaining a strong defense posture.

Prior to entering his confirmation hearings, Rumsfeld received information from Scowcroft, the new National Security Adviser, on what questions to expect from Senators. In this communication, Scowcroft covered the major issues that Rumsfeld would confront including détente, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) negotiations, adequacy of defense spending, balance between American and Soviet forces, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) issues.<sup>104</sup> Scowcroft's memorandum was an excellent preparatory tool for Rumsfeld because the Senators indeed emphasized these issues and provided Rumsfeld the opportunity to express his Cold Warrior tendencies during testimony.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>104</sup> "Defense Issues," November 1975, National Security Adviser Presidential Name File 74-77, Box 3-Folder "Rumsfeld, Don" Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

Senator John Tower (R-TX) was among the legislators who focused on some of the issues Scowcroft mentioned. Tower's concern was that people were having "wool pulled over our eyes and that a certain euphoria has perhaps set in as a result of détente."<sup>105</sup> He then proceeded to ask Rumsfeld about his views on the practice of détente to which Rumsfeld cautioned that some may assume that relaxation of tensions should mean that defense capabilities "are not necessary any longer." However, Rumsfeld then asserted that "the reason for what success there has been is the fact of our capabilities. It is our defense capabilities and the deterrent effect of those capabilities that has contributed substantially to what improvement and relationships we have seen in the past years."<sup>106</sup> In addition to urging strong defense, Rumsfeld also advocated the maintenance of American forces in Europe as a source of deterrence to Soviet aggression.<sup>107</sup> Rumsfeld's exchange with Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) further demonstrated his tough attitude on defense.

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<sup>105</sup> Nomination of Donald Rumsfeld to be Secretary of Defense Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate, 12-13 November 1975, p. 11, Richard Cheney Files, Box 3-Folder "Defense- Hearings on Donald Rumsfeld's Nomination as Secretary of Defense, 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 13.

In response to Goldwater's point that the United States was currently spending the smallest portion of its Gross National Product (GNP) on defense in U.S. history, Rumsfeld expressed his opinion that "the U.S. Government should, in fact, provide real increases in the defense budget"<sup>108</sup> rather than simply increasing expenditures with inflation. Additionally, Rumsfeld advocated that those in uniform "receive something more closely approximating a competitive pay level with those who are not serving in the Armed Forces"<sup>109</sup> clearly showing his belief that a standing, professional military must retain valuable talent by offering desirable wages that will inspire members to accept extended service commitments.

When Goldwater "turned to détente,"<sup>110</sup> Rumsfeld further cautioned that the U.S. must not "erroneously relax our vigilance."<sup>111</sup> Finally, Goldwater expressed his alarm at Kissinger being "hellbent on achieving détente with Russia regardless of the fact that our military is not increasing in power enough to assure that we can maintain the conditions of détente which he is suggesting."<sup>112</sup> After initially sidestepping this

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 22.

question most likely so that he would not be led into insulting the Secretary of State, Rumsfeld later in the hearings responded to Goldwater's question of whether or not the U.S. needed "force to back up our position" by stating that "Absolutely, there is no question but that that capability is the underpinning of the security and stability we have seen in this world, the relative stability since World War II."<sup>113</sup> Rumsfeld's exchange with Senator Scott also endeared him to the anti-détente crowd.

Senator Scott focused primarily on the dangers of détente. Rumsfeld articulated to Scott one of his largest related concerns with the following statement:

The danger is that the American people and the people in other free countries will assume that there are not fundamental differences between our systems, will assume that, in fact, because there has been relative stability, there need not be vigilance, and will assume, therefore, there is no need for defense capability.<sup>114</sup>

Satisfied with this answer, Scott then turned to asking Rumsfeld "Can you be your own man at the Department of Defense regardless of the Secretary of State?" to which Rumsfeld replied "Absolutely."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 40.

Rumsfeld's discussion with Senator Robert Byrd further solidified his commitment to not becoming complacent in dealing with the Soviet Union when he stated that "those who suggest that because we are able to trade or able to engage in SALT negotiations, or in MBFR negotiation with the Soviet Union, those who conclude that because of that we therefore should reduce our defense capability, reduce the deterrent, are flatly wrong."<sup>116</sup> Undoubtedly, the new Secretary of Defense for the Ford Administration was dedicated to a much more aggressive defense posture for the United States and was a staunch opponent of détente which would become evident in the way he performed his duties.

In the long run, Donald Rumsfeld's testimony eased several concerns. First of all, Rumsfeld's personal views and forceful testimony eased the fear that Schlesinger's removal would silence criticism of détente within the administration. Secondly, Rumsfeld's political savvy and personality would make him much more effective in working with Kissinger and dealing with Congress on defense issues than Schlesinger who, according to Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski in For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 57.



States of America, "alienated Kissinger and Congress, a fatal combination." An example of Schlesinger's lack of tact in dealing with legislators was when he "accused the House Appropriations Committee of making 'savage' cuts in the Pentagon budget for 'political considerations.'" <sup>117</sup>

Along similar lines, Ford regarded Rumsfeld as a personal friend and thought very highly of him <sup>118</sup> unlike Schlesinger whom Ford loathed. Interestingly enough, this strong relationship between the President and Secretary of Defense and the fact that Rumsfeld had "spent more time with Ford than any other official, including Kissinger," <sup>119</sup> would allow Rumsfeld to have tremendous influence on the President since Ford respected and trusted him.

The special bond between Ford and his new Secretary of Defense combined with Rumsfeld's strong position against détente likely led the Yediot Aharonot, an independent Israeli news publication in Tel Aviv, to

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<sup>117</sup> Washington Post clipping from article entitled "Different View on Defense," 9 November 1975, John Marsh Files; 1974-77, Box 1-Folder "Defense- Confirmation of Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>118</sup> Lt. Gen Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.), interview by 2LT Mark W. Hanson, USAF, 2 June 2003.

<sup>119</sup> Newsweek magazine clipping from article entitled "Ford's Big Shuffle," 17 November 1975, p. 34, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

conclude that "the new Secretary of Defense may prove more dangerous to Kissinger than Schlesinger."<sup>120</sup> After all, Rumsfeld clearly enjoyed a close working relationship with Ford as is evident from a friendly letter that he sent Ford after his confirmation hearings advising the President to study the Senators' comments and be aware of their concerns.<sup>121</sup> The proximity to the commander-in-chief that Rumsfeld enjoyed would certainly make him a powerful influence and the counterbalance to Kissinger that advocates of conservative views on defense sought.

Schlesinger did voice his opinions against détente while he was Secretary of Defense, but was unable to influence Ford who dismissed his concerns mostly for personal reasons. Rumsfeld, on the other hand, would have no problem succeeding where his predecessor had fallen short because Ford was willing to listen to a man that he held in the highest regard. Consequently, détente would come to a crashing end during Ford's final

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<sup>120</sup> Washington Post clipping from article entitled "Other Voices: The Ford Shake-up," 11 November 1975, John Marsh Files, Box 1-Folder "Administration Personnel Shake-up 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>121</sup> Memorandum from Donald Rumsfeld to President Ford "Transcript of the hearings on my nomination," 18 November 1975, Richard Cheney Files, Box 3-Folder "Defense-Hearings on Donald Rumsfeld's Nomination as Secretary of Defense, 11/75," Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

months as president with Rumsfeld championing and helping usher in a new era of Cold War tensions.

#### TRADE POLICY UNDERMINING SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Philip Funigiello in American-Soviet Trade in the Cold War, an "examination of American-Soviet trade policy and its relation to the national security of the United States,"<sup>122</sup> writes that "domestic politics, economic factors, and national security considerations interacted to affect Cold War diplomacy."<sup>123</sup> This idea certainly held true on issues of trade between the two superpowers. Trade policy with the Soviet Union became one of the major areas where domestic anti-détente voices influenced the Ford administration's decision-making with regards to international relations. In addition to Rumsfeld being firmly established as the strongest opponent of détente within the administration, other figures pressed the President to take a less friendly stance in dealing with the Soviets on trade. Several trade issues and their outcomes reflect the interaction of domestic politics,

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<sup>122</sup> Philip J. Funigiello, American-Soviet Trade in the Cold War (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), ix.

<sup>123</sup> Funigiello, x.

economic factors, and national security concerns that contributed to breakdown of superpower cooperation that the anti-détente coalition sought.

Examination of federal intervention in a business deal between IBM and the Soviet tourist agency, Intourist, provides excellent insight into the Ford Administration's less cooperative posture in handling American/Soviet relations. On April 9, 1976 National Security Council Staffer David Elliott informed Scowcroft that, regarding a computer system that IBM had designed for Intourist, an "export license was denied because there were no safeguards to guard against unauthorized use of this large machine and even larger memory bank."<sup>124</sup> After the administration's rejection of IBM's proposal to do business with the Communist Soviet government, IBM elected to seek the administration's input and find a way to still sell the equipment to Intourist while accommodating national security interests.

In response to the Ford administration's concerns, IBM "reduced the system configuration substantially, from a duplex to a single processor system with much less on-

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<sup>124</sup> Memorandum from David Elliott to Brent Scowcroft "Intourist Computer Export," 9 April 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (33), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

line storage capacity, to ensure complete utilization of the system for the authorized use."<sup>125</sup> In all, the new computer possessed "little additional capability not already available to the KGB" and was "a system which can be reasonably safeguarded."<sup>126</sup> Satisfied with IBM's modifications, Bill Clements, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, wrote to Secretary of Commerce Elliot Richardson on 25 February 1976 that the Department of Defense "concur[s] in approval of this revised system."<sup>127</sup> One month later on 25 March, Deputy Secretary of State Robert S. Ingersoll informed Richardson that "the scaled-down system proposed by the company would meet the U.S. and COCOM [(Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls)] standards for approval without significant risk of diversion to KGB or other undesirable uses." Consequently, Ingersoll stated that "IBM should be given a favorable advisory opinion."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Memorandum "IBM Request for an Advisory Opinion on the Likelihood of an Export License Being Issued for a Smaller Computer System for Intourist," National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (33), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Letter from Deputy Secretary of Defense Bill Clements to Secretary of Commerce Elliot L. Richardson, 25 February 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (33), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>128</sup> Letter from Deputy Secretary of State Robert S. Ingersoll to Secretary of Commerce Elliot L. Richardson, 25

On 9 April 1976, then, Elliott concluded to Scowcroft that "the new system is licensable" so on 10 April, 1976, Scowcroft concurred with DOD and Department of State approval in a letter to the Secretary of Commerce. Consequently, licensing would be permitted. Still, while IBM was allowed to sell equipment to the Soviet company, it is clear that Ford's administration took a strong interest in the specifics of the deal. Understanding and partially embracing the anti-détente views of figures like Senator Robert C. Byrd who proposed a "moratorium on computer licenses for the Soviet Union" in December 1975 and the Young Americans for Freedom that protested outside many IBM offices in October 1975 the sale of computer equipment to the Soviets, the Ford Administration ensured that no technology sale would be permitted that endangered American national security interests. This satisfied many paranoid individuals and groups. Concerns over potential nuclear technology sales also ignited a firestorm of discontent and further demonstrated the rising tide of anti-détente sentiment.

A 4 May, 1976 letter to Ford from a doctor in Uniontown, PA best captured the hysteria generated by a

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March 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (33), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

recent article in Scripps-Howard entitled "U.S. Ponders Giving Nuclear Sub Savvy to USSR." In his letter, Dr. William J. Mitchell wrote, "I was rather dismayed to see in the newspaper the other day a report that we are planning to give our atomic secrets to Russia. No amount of détente will ever compensate us for giving away those secrets which, while they are supposedly only domestic, can clearly be made for military purposes according to Admiral Rickover."<sup>129</sup>

The article that Dr. Mitchell referred to stated that "The government, led by the State Department, is presently studying whether or not to allow export of U.S. light water (nuclear) reactor technology to the Soviet Union."<sup>130</sup> The direct reference to the State Department immediately angered the anti-détente opponents of Kissinger and provided them with more ammunition to attack the Secretary of State who now appeared to be giving away precious American technology that could lead to Soviet advances in weaponry that would threaten American national security.

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<sup>129</sup> Letter from Dr. William J. Mitchell, M.D. to President Gerald R. Ford, 4 May 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (38), Archives G.R.F.L, Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>130</sup> Scripps-Howard clipping from article entitled "U.S. Ponders Giving Nuclear Sub Savvy to USSR," National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (38), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

As early as 18 December 1975, staunch Kissinger foe Senator Henry M. Jackson was aware of the Administration's consideration of such sales to the Soviet Union and stressed that "great care must be taken to ensure that it does not contribute to the military potential of our principal adversary."<sup>131</sup> Additionally, Jackson stated that "It is naïve to think that any U.S. light-water reactor technology exported to the Soviet Union will not provide direct benefits to the Soviet nuclear submarine program."<sup>132</sup> In response, Rumsfeld assured Jackson that "the DOD will not support any U.S. nuclear export which will be of direct or indirect value to Soviet military programs."<sup>133</sup> Nonetheless, when the story broke about the consideration of selling nuclear technology to the communists, the Administration was forced to assure critics and anti-détente forces that it was not taking any actions that would harm the safety of Americans.

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<sup>131</sup> Letter from Senator Henry M. Jackson to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, 18 December 1975, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (38), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Memorandum from NSA Brent Scowcroft to President Ford "Study of U.S. Nuclear Exports to the USSR," 29 May 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (38), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.



In an environment filled with hysteria at the prospect of American technological advantages being sold to the communist Soviet Union, the National Security Council responded to growing concerns about sharing nuclear information. Correspondence from Elliott to Scowcroft indicates that in reaction to West Germany "exploring the sale of a reactor to the Soviet Union" the U.S. granted approval because "the technology was old enough that there was little risk attached to permitting the Germans to sell the reactor to the Soviet Union." However, after this deal was reached, concerns arose as to whether or not American firms were being unjustly discriminated against so Ford requested a "further study of possible guidelines for U.S. nuclear trade with Communist countries" as a means for helping American business interests by eliminating such economic barriers in the future and allowing them to compete for such potentially lucrative contracts.<sup>134</sup> Elliott further offered the assurance that no U.S. companies were currently pursuing approval to sell nuclear technology to

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<sup>134</sup>NSC Memorandum from David Elliott to Brent Scowcroft "Study of U.S. Nuclear Exports to the USSR," 21 May 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (38), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

the Soviets. Consequently, no significant grounds for overreacting or panic existed.

Upon receiving Elliott's assessment, Scowcroft reiterated to Ford on 29 May 1976 the concern about business discrimination against American firms and suggesting that the Administration "require a case-by-case assessment" for any potential deals. He then emphasized that "no U.S. nuclear export which would be of direct or indirect value to the Soviet military programs would be permitted."<sup>135</sup>

So, while the sale of U.S. nuclear secrets to its communist adversary were never a real threat and precautions would be taken to prevent the endangerment of national security, the mere thought of such transactions generated tension and concern among détente opponents. Later, the actual defeat of other trade legislation represented a triumph for the anti-détente crowd.

Greene's account of the collapse of the American-Soviet trade agreement in 1975 shows how détente had certainly fallen from favor in American policy. While the Ford administration had labored arduously to attain

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<sup>135</sup>Memorandum from NSA Brent Scowcroft to President Ford "Study of U.S. Nuclear Exports to the USSR," 29 May 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (38), Archives G.R.F.L, Ann Arbor, MI.

some sort of agreement between the two superpowers, anti-détente forces completely undermined its work referring to the trade deal as the "Great Grain Robbery."<sup>136</sup>

Senator Jackson's efforts, started in 1972, to link Most Favored Nation status to freedom of emigration for Soviet Jews "played a crucial role in bringing together liberal and conservative critics of détente,"<sup>137</sup> further strengthening the opposition to Ford's Soviet policies, and ultimately led to a collapse in trade and more rising tensions between the two nations since the Jackson amendment to the trade bill "irritated"<sup>138</sup> the Soviets. According to Funigiello, the Senate's ratification of a treaty not agreeable to the Soviets, largely caused by Jackson, "caused the Soviet Union to annul the trade agreement in 1975, which contributed to the end of détente."<sup>139</sup> As a consequence, "Trade per capita between the two nations dropped, Jewish emigration fell from 35,000 to 13,000 in 1975, and the rhetoric between the two nations became publicly bitter once again."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Funigiello, 184.

<sup>137</sup> Funigiello, 221.

<sup>138</sup> Ford, 200.

<sup>139</sup> Funigiello, 221.

<sup>140</sup> Greene, 123.

Trade issues between the two nations, "unstable" since the end of WWI,<sup>141</sup> support Kissinger's assertion that "American-Soviet relations were turning fragile under the impact of an ideological crusade conducted without adequate regard for the long-term international consequences."<sup>142</sup> Undoubtedly, the spirit of cooperation between the superpowers was on the decline as elements within the United States urged a tougher stance against communism, consistent with Funigiello's point that "from the start of the Cold War, the United States and its allies have invoked economic threats and sanctions...to contain or modify Soviet behavior in the international arena,"<sup>143</sup> and resisted the policies of détente. Concerns such as IBM computers and nuclear reactor sales combined with the trade bill debacle certainly reflect the resurging animosities that emerged during Ford's White House tenure as his administration shifted away from détente and toward confrontation.

#### VLADIVOSTOK AND THE SALT II DEBACLE

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<sup>141</sup> Funigiello, ix.

<sup>142</sup> Years of Renewal, 307.

<sup>143</sup> Funigiello, ix.

As U.S.-Soviet trade issues resurrected tensions between the two nations, so too did other issues in the diplomatic arena. Triumph would turn to tragedy for Ford's diplomacy team following the initially perceived success of arms limitation talks held at Vladivostok ushering in new problems in relations between the superpowers.

Garthoff provides an excellent summary of the Vladivostok summit with Ford and Brezhnev with the following account:

The Vladivostok summit conference took place on November 23 and 24 [1974] outside the city at a military sanatorium resort called Okeanskaya (Oceanic). The discussions of SALT dominated the meeting and were essentially concluded on the first day. Agreement was reached on a framework for a ten-year agreement, including accord on an equal aggregate level (2,400 launchers and heavy bombers) and an equal sublimit for launchers of missiles with MIRVs (1,320).<sup>144</sup>

Garthoff further writes that "President Ford later described his reaction at the time as 'euphoric' and commented that Brezhnev shared his enthusiasm."<sup>145</sup>

However, while the two leaders expected to sign the treaty in the spring of 1975, Garthoff makes the critical point that "The Vladivostok agreement...was only the

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<sup>144</sup> Garthoff, 497.

<sup>145</sup> Garthoff, 497.

outline for the future treaty."<sup>146</sup> Unfortunately for the Ford administration, opponents of détente killed SALT II before it could even reach the table.

Ford reflected in his memoirs that "The Soviets had learned during Nixon's years in office that the future of their relations with the United States didn't depend solely on the decisions of the American President. Congress was a force to be reckoned with, and Brezhnev wasn't happy about that."<sup>147</sup> Brezhnev certainly had reason to be dissatisfied with the role Congress played in American foreign relations because Congress succeeded in derailing SALT II.

Difficulties with Congress and within the Ford administration emerged prior to Ford's trip to Vladivostok in 1974. Schlesinger, the combatant Secretary of Defense, demanded that all agreements with the Soviet Union implement measures insuring equal stockpiles of munitions and Senator Jackson went as far as to introduce "an amendment requiring that all future agreements with the Soviets be based on numerical equality."<sup>148</sup> Kissinger was concerned that such a hard line would drive the Soviets away from the bargaining

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<sup>146</sup> Garthoff, 497.

<sup>147</sup> Ford, 216-217.

<sup>148</sup> Greene, 124.

table, but such an outcome was not necessarily viewed as a negative consequence by those that wished to aggressively confront the communist power and cease with the less hostile diplomatic negotiations.<sup>149</sup>

Even after the firing of Schlesinger in Ford's effort to assemble his "own team," anti-détente views still heavily influenced the administration and ultimately undermined SALT II. As Ford later noted, "opposition came from Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I recognized that they held the trump card. The Senate would have to ratify the new accord. If Rumsfeld or the Joint Chiefs testified against it, there was no way that the Senate would ever go along with it."<sup>150</sup> In the long run, despite seeking better relations with the Soviet Union, Ford acquiesced to the anti-détente forces. After all, he had replaced as Secretary of Defense one bitter opponent of détente with Rumsfeld, a man equally as opposed to it and willing to act against it with negative Congressional testimony, so it is no wonder why SALT II withered away.

Indeed, as Kissinger points out, "Our elation [following Vladivostok] turned out to be misplaced. For

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<sup>149</sup> Greene, 124.

<sup>150</sup> Ford, 357.

the front lines of the détente debate in Washington were manned by dedicated men and women not about to modify their conviction that agreement with the Soviets was more dangerous than stalemate even after a successful summit."<sup>151</sup> Despite Kissinger's advice to the President that "We should be polite but firm. If they really wanted an agreement, they would be the ones to bend"<sup>152</sup> being correct, opponents of SALT II were able to prevent a resolution to the Soviet Backfire bomber and U.S. Tomahawk missile issues and, more importantly, successfully delay a Senate vote on the ratification of SALT II for the duration of Ford's tenure.<sup>153</sup> Coinciding with the failure to reach such a monumental agreement was the further breakdown of U.S.-Soviet relations and decline of détente under Ford.

#### FURTHER DIPLOMATIC STRUGGLE

With SALT II's assured failure, relations between the U.S. and Soviet Union reentered a phase of heightened tensions resembling the earlier days of the Cold War. The spirit of cooperation forged under détente had given

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<sup>151</sup> Years of Renewal, 299.

<sup>152</sup> Ford, 216.

<sup>153</sup> Greene, 126.



way to a reemergence of finger-pointing, name-calling, and overall bitterness between the superpowers reminiscent of troubled times in the past.

Scowcroft's correspondence with Ford on 24 September 1976 offers insight into the rising tensions between the U.S. and Soviet Union as détente faded away. Scowcroft provided the President with information from a recent meeting between the American ambassador to the Soviet Union Averill Harriman and Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev. Among the highlights from the Harriman-Brezhnev meeting that Scowcroft presented to Ford was Brezhnev's assertion that "it was no fault of the Soviet Union that the process of improving relations had slowed down," Brezhnev's complaining about the U.S. perceiving a "mythical Soviet threat for which there were no grounds," and Brezhnev's frustration with "considerable propaganda in the U.S. that the Soviets are preparing a first strike." Additionally, Brezhnev expressed his disappointment that the U.S. had not responded to the Soviet Union's most recent SALT proposal commenting "surely if that is the attitude now taken by the

administration, it is not a token of willingness or desire to achieve agreement.'"<sup>154</sup>

Without a doubt, the Soviet Secretary General recognized that the Ford administration had been influenced by anti-détente elements and had turned away from the policies that the U.S. once celebrated during the years of Nixon and Kissinger's control of American foreign policy. Presidential memoranda concerning upcoming meeting between Ford and Soviet foreign minister Gromyko in the winter of 1976 shed further light on the sad state of U.S. soviet relations.

In preparation for Ford's meeting with Gromyko, both Kissinger and Scowcroft briefed the President on the state of relations between the U.S. and Soviet Union and the issues that would likely be discussed when the two men met. Kissinger and Scowcroft agreed that current relations between the two nations were not desirable with Kissinger referring to them as "dangerously sour"<sup>155</sup> and

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<sup>154</sup>Memorandum from NSA Brent Scowcroft to President Ford "Harriman-Brezhnev Meeting," 24 September 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (43), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>155</sup>Memorandum from Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger to President Ford "Your Meeting with Gromyko," 30 September 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (44), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

Scowcroft commenting that "the pace of the relationship has slowed considerably."<sup>156</sup>

Kissinger's 30 September memorandum to the President outlined the numerous sources of Soviet discontent by mentioning the following:

Our irritation with Soviet behavior is reciprocated in Moscow. The MIG-25 affair touched sensitive nerves. So did the Schlesinger China trip, which again raised the spectre of US-Chinese military cooperation. The Soviets are frustrated at the lack of progress in SALT, US activism in Africa, and further setbacks to their position in the Middle East. Administration defense procurement requests, particularly in the strategic area, and steps such as the US redeployment to the UK of more F-111's that can reach the USSR, cause Moscow worry.<sup>157</sup>

Also in the document, Kissinger encouraged the President to address problems in Berlin that resulted when the communist German Democratic Republic interrupted transit routes on 13 August 1976 threatening free Western access and movement throughout the city and the Soviet Union's "failure to carry out provisions of our Maritime Agreement providing for one-third carriage of grain to

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<sup>156</sup> Background paper from NSA Brent Scowcroft to President Ford "Meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko," 1 October 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (44), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>157</sup> Memorandum from Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger to President Ford "Your Meeting with Gromyko," 30 September 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (44), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

the USSR by US ships"<sup>158</sup> which had been a cornerstone of the U.S.-Soviet grain trade deal. Additionally, Kissinger stressed that the President must inform the Soviets of increased domestic pressure on the President to insure that the U.S. was not becoming strategically vulnerable to the Soviets and that the President must provide the Soviets areas where their actions might generate a positive reaction within the U.S.<sup>159</sup>

Clearly, relations had deteriorated significantly, evident in Kissinger's serious tone. On 1 October 1976, Scowcroft reinforced Kissinger's sense of urgency for reestablishing cordial relations as soon as possible by offering the following summary of sources for problems:

The events in Angola, the tone of the US election campaign, the situation in Lebanon, the lack of progress on SALT and MFN, charges and counter-charges on CSCE implementation, the MIG-25 defection and the current Soviet campaign against our diplomatic initiatives in Africa all have been contributing factors.<sup>160</sup>

Undoubtedly, the diplomatic situation was bleak and détente was for all intents and purposes dead. Despite encouraging signs noted in information provided to

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>160</sup> Background paper from NSA Brent Scowcroft to President Ford "Meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko," 1 October 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (44), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

Scowcroft on 28 October 1976 detailing the progress of Soviet Intercontinental Ballistic Missile dismantling which stated that the U.S.S.R. was "continuing to make progress in dismantling old SS-7 & 8 ICBM launchers to compensate for replacement SLBM launchers on submarines,"<sup>161</sup> relations between the two nations remained on a downward course even with Soviet fulfillment of promises and compliance with agreements. Initiatives toward peaceful coexistence now seemed a distant memory and détente collapsed under Ford's watch as did the President's overall foreign policy program soon thereafter when Jimmy Carter won the election of 1976.

#### ANNOYANCE AND ANTAGONISM

The decline of détente and renewal of animosities led to an increase in actions on both sides of the Cold War that concerned and upset the other. The U.S. and Soviet Union began to engage in programs and policies caring little how their adversary might react. This is evident in

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<sup>161</sup> NSC Memorandum from Richard T. Boverie to NSA Brent Scowcroft "Soviet ICBM Dismantling," 28 October 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 20-Folder USSR (46), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

several diplomatic and military maneuvers that took place in 1976.

A major move that caused uneasiness between the two powers in 1976 was the Soviet Union's "Intention to place into orbit a number of synchronous communications satellites named STATSIONAR"<sup>162</sup> The U.S. Deputy Director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy, John Eger, immediately became worried about this announcement mainly because he feared Soviet competition with an American satellite system called INTELSAT that would use "predatory pricing" to "siphon off existing traffic and revenue from the INTELSAT system."<sup>163</sup> More importantly, though, the Soviet move to set up STATSIONAR represented a challenge to "the leadership traditionally and successfully held by the United States in these areas."<sup>164</sup> Eger concluded to Scowcroft on 16 January 1976 that "This action could have major significance and possible adverse impact on broad United States international telecommunications policy interests" and that ultimately,

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<sup>162</sup> Background paper from the Deputy Director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy "Soviet Union Communications Satellite Program," 16 January 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 18-Folder USSR (29), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 3.

"The United States should try to dissuade them."<sup>165</sup> On 21 January 1976, Elliott agreed with Eger that Scowcroft needed to learn more about the Soviet Union's intentions, but Elliott also concluded that "no appropriate action" was warranted at the time.<sup>166</sup> Still, while no direct response occurred, the Soviet Union did manage to stir-up the administration a little with its proposal. The U.S. would later raise Soviet concerns with its own controversial act.

On 5 April 1976, a National Security Council staffer Richard T. Boverie discussed with his colleague William G. Hyland the U.S. Army's recent shipment of "three Soviet tanks to Europe for use in the training of US forces in Germany."<sup>167</sup> Boverie stated that the Soviet tanks "were captured by Israel in the 1973 war and have been given to the US under an ongoing program of Soviet

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<sup>165</sup> Memorandum from the Deputy Director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy John Eger to NSA Brent Scowcroft "Soviet Union Communications Satellite Program," 16 January 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 18-Folder USSR (29), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>166</sup> NSC Memorandum from David Elliott to NSA Brent Scowcroft "Soviet Telecommunications," 21 January 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 18-Folder USSR (29), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>167</sup> NSC Memorandum from Richard T. Boverie to William G. Hyland "Weapons Tests in Europe on Soviet Equipment," 5 April 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (33), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

arms acquisition from Israel."<sup>168</sup> Aware of the Soviet Union's inevitable concerns, Boverie pointed out that this was the first time that Soviet equipment was to be used in Europe for training and also mentions how some members of the National Security Council have informal objections to the program questioning "Why take the risk of doing this in Europe? Why not Aberdeen?" which would have a much less likelihood of upsetting the Soviets.<sup>169</sup> Nonetheless, no call for action was made so the tanks went to Europe and taunted the Soviets. An unfolding situation involving a Soviet ship in June would then raise tensions again.

On 30 June 1976, Boverie wrote Scowcroft raising an issue involving the Soviet vessel Kiev and its intended passage through the Turkish Straits. Boverie presented the controversy the ship was generating among signatories of the Montreux Convention, of which the U.S. was not a signatory, because certain types of warships, including aircraft carriers, were prohibited from passage. The Kiev represented an especially troubling situation because much debate surrounded its actual classification. The British and Americans considered it an aircraft

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 2.



carrier because of its ability to launch vertical take-off and landing aircraft (VTOL) and helicopters while the Soviets viewed it as an anti-submarine vessel. The British were opposed to the passage of the ship as a consequence of their classification of it and viewed the decision by the Soviets to launch it through the Straits as a violation of the Montreux Convention. While Boverie offered no advice on a course of action, he did mention the potential negative consequences of apparent U.S. acquiescence to an aggressive Soviet move such as an appearance of weakness in the face of the Communists.<sup>170</sup>

When further correspondence finally took place in October, the U.S. ultimately resolved to do nothing despite being disturbed by the Soviet action. On 20 October, Boverie again wrote Scowcroft and emphasized that "No action is recommended."<sup>171</sup> Scowcroft, in turn, briefed Ford on 26 October and recommended not responding in any manner to the Kiev's passage. On the issue of

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<sup>170</sup> NSC Memorandum from Richard T. Boverie to NSA Brent Scowcroft "Prospective Transit of Soviet Aircraft Carrier Kiev through the Turkish Straits," 30 June 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (39), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>171</sup> NSC Memorandum from Richard T. Boverie to NSA Brent Scowcroft "The Montreux Convention and the Kiev," 20 October 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 20-Folder USSR (46), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

whether or not the U.S. should encourage and perhaps openly join a British protest, the State Department on 28 October advised that "The United States is not a party to the 1936 Montreux Convention and has no role in its administration" so a protest would be a mere "political act."<sup>172</sup> Seconding the State Department's position was Rumsfeld who made it clear to the President that "it would be difficult to support a protest by signatories of the Convention to the passage of the KIEV."<sup>173</sup>

Ultimately, Boverie concluded to Scowcroft on 30 October that "there is no firm basis for opposing the passage of the Kiev or its sister ships, and no further action appears necessary."<sup>174</sup> So again, one superpower engaged in an activity that disturbed the other, but no major response followed. Still, such antagonisms only

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<sup>172</sup> Memorandum from Department of State Executive Secretary C. Arthur Borg to NSA Brent Scowcroft "The Montreux Convention and the Soviet Naval Vessel Kiev," 28 October 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 20-Folder USSR (46), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>173</sup> Memorandum from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to President Ford "The Montreux Convention and the Kiev," 5 October 1976, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 20-Folder USSR (46), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>174</sup> NSC Memorandum from Richard T. Boverie to NSA Brent Scowcroft "The Montreux Convention and the Kiev," 30 October 1976, p. 2, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 20-Folder USSR (46), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

fostered the further breakdown of cordial relations and death of détente during the Ford years.

#### MILITARY BUILDUP- THE CLEAR INDICATOR

Cabinet shake-ups, political pressure, breakdown of trade, and failed diplomacy all indicated and contributed to the decline of détente, but one other key area likely had the strongest influence: military buildup. Increased American and highly aggressive Soviet expansion of defense capabilities certainly showed that the days of peaceful coexistence had subsided. Détente was clearly dead with the advent of a new arms race inspired by mutual distrust and animosity brought on once the spirit of cooperation faded away.

On 20 April 1976, Boverie indicated to Scowcroft that the 24 April Soviet Military Trends and Capabilities Briefing for Ford would have an "alarmist" tone.<sup>175</sup> Indeed, it did. Scowcroft's briefing with the President touched on many points that illustrated advanced Soviet buildup. He mentioned that the Soviets now possessed

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<sup>175</sup> NSC memorandum from Richard T. Boverie to NSA Brent Scowcroft "DIA Threat Briefing to the President on Thursday, April 22, 1976," 20 April 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (34), Archives G.R.F.L, Ann Arbor, MI.

"three new ICBM systems" that incorporated "significant improvements in accuracy," that Soviet submarines had expanded their operations to areas closer to U.S. soil, that the Soviets were "actively pursuing ballistic missile defense technology," and pursuing advancement in other areas of air, ground, and sea combat capability.<sup>176</sup> Scowcroft further added that "Our own current modernization efforts are substantial and take into account projections of the Soviet threat"<sup>177</sup> clearly showing that the U.S. was expanding as well and that an arms race was well underway. The extent of expansion is evident in U.S. government reports on the subject.

A Central Intelligence Agency report entitled "Estimated Soviet Defense Spending in Rubles, 1970-1975" offers tremendous insight into the extent of Soviet "peacetime"<sup>178</sup> mobilization. The report cites that Soviet defense spending grew from "40-45 billion rubles in 1970 to 55-60 billion rubles in 1975" with an estimated "average annual growth rate of 4-5 percent over the

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>178</sup> "Peacetime" placed in quotation marks to add emphasis. While technically peacetime mobilization, the phrase "peacetime mobilization" is contradictory since the Soviet buildup took place during the height of the Cold War.

period."<sup>179</sup> To better illustrate the emphasis that the Soviets placed on defense expenditures the CIA publication states that "some 11-13 percent of Soviet gross national product (GNP)"<sup>180</sup> went toward defense expenditures. Further alarming details of Soviet spending patterns are the fact that investment in missile programs increased 5-6 percent annually,<sup>181</sup> investment on strategic rocket forces capable of striking the U.S. grew from 7 percent to 14 percent of the total defense budget,<sup>182</sup> and the Soviet air force experienced a 10 percent annual growth rate in funding.<sup>183</sup>

The CIA concluded that the "long-term growth in military spending will continue, albeit perhaps at a more moderate pace"<sup>184</sup> indicating that the Soviets were pursuing massive military capabilities buildup. A useful CIA study comparing the expenditures by the two superpowers on defense is also indicative of the accelerating arms race.

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<sup>179</sup> CIA Report "Estimated Soviet Defense Spending in Rubles, 1970-1975," May 1976, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 19-Folder USSR (35), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 17.

"A Dollar Cost Comparison of Soviet and US Defense Activities 1966-1976," published by the CIA in January 1977, uses 1975 dollars to compare the military expenditures of each superpower.<sup>185</sup> The CIA report concluded that "Soviet military activities overall are growing and currently are significantly larger than those of the US."<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, it pointed out that "Soviet defense activities exceed US defense outlays by a widening margin in every year after 1971" and as of 1976, Soviet spending was anywhere from 33 to 40 percent greater than that of the U.S.<sup>187</sup> Regarding military investment in the procurement of weapons and equipment, Soviet spending by first exceeded U.S. spending in 1970 and by 1976 was roughly twice that appropriated by the U.S.<sup>188</sup> In the area of operating costs, the Soviets held a 15 percent advantage over the Americans. Other discomfoting Soviet advantages by 1976 included possessing roughly twice the amount of manpower compared

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<sup>185</sup> CIA Report "A Dollar Cost Comparison of Soviet and US Defense Activities 1966-1976," January 1977, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 20-Folder USSR (49), Archives G.R.F.L, Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 7.

to the U.S.,<sup>189</sup> over 3.5 times the expenditures on strategic forces, and a 10 percent greater investment in support elements.<sup>190</sup> In summary, the CIA report told how "the Soviet level [of defense spending] began to exceed that of the US in the early seventies; and the margin has increased steadily since."<sup>191</sup>

Possessing such information, it is no wonder why anti-détente voices like Senator Jackson shared the "nightmare" of "strategic vulnerability"<sup>192</sup> despite the following assessment from Kissinger in March 1976:

Soviet strength is uneven; the weaknesses and frustrations of the Soviet system are glaring and have been clearly documented. Despite that inevitable increase in power, the Soviet Union remains far behind us and our allies in any overall assessment of military, economic, and technological strength; it would be reckless in the extreme for the Soviet Union to challenge the industrial democracies. And Soviet society is no longer insulated from the influences and attractions of the outside world or impervious to the need for external contacts.<sup>193</sup>

Seemingly far behind the Soviets in most areas except expenditures on the bomber force which the U.S. held a 40 percent to 5 percent of total defense expenditure

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>192</sup> Diplomacy, 751.

<sup>193</sup> Diplomacy, 747.

advantage,<sup>194</sup> many feared that the U.S. was indeed falling behind in the Cold War and détente was facilitating American loss of ground and leading the nation on a destructive path toward defeat at the hands of the communist Soviet menace. Unwilling to accept such a scenario, unrelenting anti-Communist, anti-détente voices within the U.S. rallied to influence policy and push the Ford Administration away from a foreign policy program that was now seen to be undermining American interests and placing the U.S. in harm's way.

#### THE FALL OF DÉTENTE

The Defense Intelligence Agency's 2 September 1975 report "Détente in Soviet Strategy" launched a devastating salvo in the campaign to eliminate the once celebrated foreign policy program. Commenting that "in the USSR it is seen as a strategy for achieving broader Soviet strategic objectives as well as tactical aims without fueling the sorts of concern that might galvanize the West into

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<sup>194</sup> CIA Report "A Dollar Cost Comparison of Soviet and US Defense Activities 1966-1976," January 1977, p. 12, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 20-Folder USSR (49), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.



serious counteraction"<sup>195</sup> and that the West is "accommodating to rising Soviet Power," this report served as a means to rally many against détente out of fear of Soviet global domination that may result should détente be pursued further. Citing Soviet goals including the destruction of western alliances, ending the American military presence in Europe, creating Soviet supremacy in Europe, and the "establishment of Soviet political, military, technological, and economic superiority worldwide,"<sup>196</sup> the Defense Intelligence Agency managed to send an alarming message to the readers of its report. Further commenting that "détente has served Soviet purposes well"<sup>197</sup> and that "détente represents an interval of 10 to 15 years in which Soviet ascendancy will be achieved"<sup>198</sup> only strengthened the resolve of détente opponents to bring it to an end.

Kissinger's discussion with Ford on 16 September 1975 concerning a comment from Director Arbatov, head of the Soviet Union's Institute of the USA and a close advisor of Brezhnev, added to heightened concerns.

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<sup>195</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency report "Détente in Soviet Strategy," 2 September 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 18-Folder USSR (20), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 6.

Kissinger cited once of Arbatov's principal points being "The USSR did not pledge to guarantee the social status quo in the world and to halt the progress of national liberation as part of détente"<sup>199</sup> demonstrating that the Soviets were indeed enjoying relaxed tensions, but still pursuing the ultimate goals of their misguided, Marxist-Leninist influenced communist doctrine. The results of the Defense Intelligence Agency's report combined with Arbatov's statement upholding the concerns that détente opponents shared would lead to monumental changes within the Ford Administration and in U.S. foreign policy shortly thereafter.

Facing growing opposition to détente and Kissinger from strange bedfellows across the political spectrum such as Reagan, Jackson, Byrd, hawkish conservatives, and numerous blood-thirsty Democrats seeking to regain the White House in the wake of the Watergate Scandal by exploiting the President's vulnerability with controversy surrounding détente, heightened concerns about Soviet exploitation of détente, a desire to create and maintain a balance of power that kept the United States free from

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<sup>199</sup> Memorandum from Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to President Ford "Brezhnev Adviser on US Affairs Defends Détente Against Critics at Home and Abroad," 16 September 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 18-Folder USSR (21), Archives G.R.F.L., Ann Arbor, MI.

strategic vulnerability, combined with a general breakdown in U.S.-Soviet relations to cause Ford's administration to abandon détente in favor of a more aggressive diplomatic posture with the Soviet Union. This became clear when Ford fired Schlesinger and replaced him not with a pro-détente figure, but instead Donald Rumsfeld who vehemently opposed it demonstrating that Ford embraced Schlesinger's ideas, but simply did not like him as a person. Also, Ford's removal of Kissinger's second hat as National Security Adviser was a signal that he wanted to "give the appearance that he got advice from more than one person" since he was often criticized for relying on Kissinger too much,<sup>200</sup> and, more importantly, showed that Ford was leaning away from Kissinger's ideas on foreign policy despite his deep admiration of Kissinger's work and service to the nation.

With anti-détente forces firmly established within the administration that were influencing policy leading to a renewal of the arms race, Ford sealed the fate of détente in his final months as President of the United States as tensions between the superpowers resumed. The

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<sup>200</sup> Scowcroft-Hanson interview.

"Holiday" that the Cold War took from 1969 to 1976 according to Schulzinger<sup>201</sup> was over.

#### EPILOGUE: FORD'S LEGACY

John Robert Greene writes in The Presidency of Gerald R. Ford the following:

As a moral leader, Ford surpassed the examples of every president since 1960. He had healed the scars of the spirit caused by Watergate and Vietnam, and the nation was stronger in 1976 than it had been in 1974. When I asked Ford how he wanted to be remembered as president, he replied without hesitation: "I want to be remembered as a...nice person, who worked at the job, and who left the White House in better shape than when I took it over." This legacy will remain, as it should, Gerald Ford's greatest gift to the American people.<sup>202</sup>

Indeed, Ford's presidential legacy is rather positive. His decision to pardon Nixon<sup>203</sup> was extremely courageous and indicative of Ford's desire to heal the nation and end the national nightmare of the Watergate Scandal even if it meant political sacrifice, which it did. Scowcroft also shared with me in an interview his strong admiration of Ford's courage when he chose, despite Schlesinger's objection and immense political opposition to such a

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<sup>201</sup> U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900, 289.

<sup>202</sup> Greene, 193.

<sup>203</sup> Greene, 53.

move, to keep U.S. troops in Vietnam "until the last minute" in order to insure successful evacuations and prevent mass genocide from occurring when the North Vietnamese conquered the South.<sup>204</sup> Undoubtedly, Ford was a leader capable of making tough, sometimes unpopular, but necessary decisions in order to advance the long-term interests of the U.S. However, his legacy must extend beyond being a healer and a man that made difficult choices.

Kissinger's assertion that Gerald Ford launched the U.S. toward an eventual Cold War victory was overstated since many years would pass before the official end of "hostilities" and no Ford Doctrine ever emerged that outlined a plan for ultimate Soviet defeat. Furthermore, as Scowcroft pointed out in our discussion, Ford abandoned détente not because of a desire to crush Communism, but rather "because he didn't want to lose the 1976 presidential election"<sup>205</sup> and embracing détente would have likely led to Reagan victory in the chaotic political environment Ford faced where had to achieve a delicate balance whereby he lessened "the thunder from the right, without at the same time offending the

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<sup>204</sup> Scowcroft-Hanson interview.

<sup>205</sup> Scowcroft-Hanson interview.

centrists who had supported Kissinger's foreign policies."<sup>206</sup>

Still, Ford nonetheless laid the groundwork for a more assertive American diplomatic posture even if it was heavily influenced by opponents of détente and his own political ambitions that depended on the support of those factions. That foundation for future foreign policy did lead eventually to Soviet collapse resulting from its inability to compete with the U.S., but this was not the result of a grand design by Ford and his staff.

In all, while Ford was indeed a healer and a "nice guy," he absolutely must be remembered for his important role as the President that brought about the decline of détente. Unknowingly, his policies, while not directly responsible for Soviet defeat, perhaps initiated a metaphorical touchdown drive that led to America's win and Kissinger would likely agree that Ford once again deserved to hear his beloved alma mater's fight song for his role in bringing down the "evil empire." "Hail to the victors, valiant!"

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<sup>206</sup> Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy, 217

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